

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY



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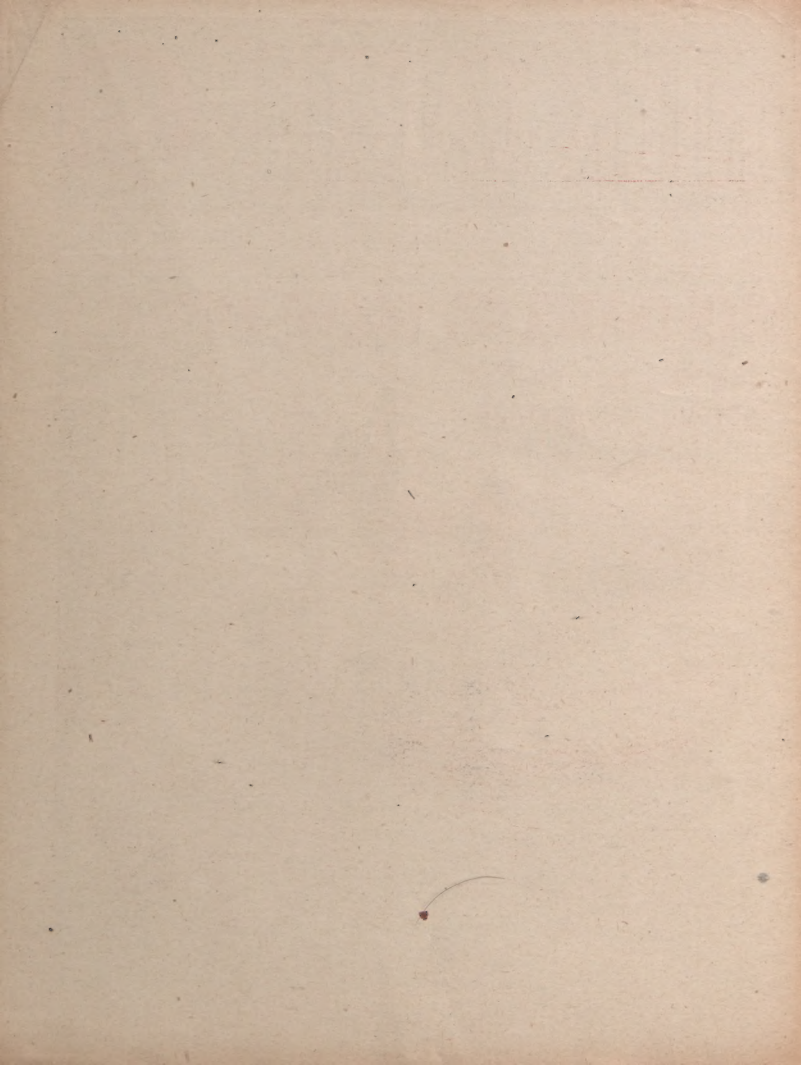
NICK CARTER AND THE GRAVE VANDALS

OR THE MYSTERY OF
ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD



BY
THE AUTHOR
OF "NICK CARTER"

Nick Carter, crouching in the icy water alongside the dock, saw the unconscious form of the girl placed in the boat by the Baron and his accomplice.





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Nick Carter and the Grave Vandals;

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

VANDALS AT WORK.

The moonlight glimmered fitfully through the branches of the gaunt yews and cast strange ghost-like shadows on the tombs and gravestones in the churchyard of old St. Paul's.

Now and then the noise of a Broadway car, the thunder of the Sixth Avenue elevated, or the jar and crash of a dirt bucket in the subway excavation broke the almost unnatural stillness.

"Hist! Be quiet, can't you?"

"Who's making a noise?"

"You are—we don't want to get pinched——"

"No, you bet we don't; it would mean that we'd both be sent over the road, and I've had enough of that."

"So have I. Don't hold that bar that way. It will——"

But before the word could be spoken, it did fall, and the crash sounded loud enough to awaken the peaceful dead in whose domain it occurred.

The policeman on his beat near the Astor House

stopped in his walk and listened, and the two tense, anxious figures watched him.

"Oh, only one of the tarriers on the subway!" he muttered, and then went on his beat, up Broadway. Little did he think that he was losing the chance of his life to make a reputation. If he had only investigated the noise of the falling crowbar, he would have solved what was to become one of the mysteries of the city's history, and which was only to be cleared up after lives had been imperiled and much time wasted.

"You fool; see how near we came that time," the first speaker whispered.

"Aw, you make me tired. You'd think I did it on purpose," the other retorted. Then they again bent to their work. They were near a certain square-topped tomb, which must be familiar to many of the thousands which pass the church every day.

They were working at the top slab, which seemed to resist their efforts. It was very old, and the elements had caused the stone to crumble and decay. The crowbar was called into use again, and then——

"She moves," panted the taller of the two.

"Yes, yes; push a little this way," answered the other.

Just then a passing car stopped, and the two men crouched in the deep shadow of the tomb and waited with bated breath. It was only delayed in its course to the Battery by the subway wagons, and in a minute started again. The motorman clanged the gong and the sound made both men jump.

"You're as scared as a cat," sneered one of them.

"Oh, rats; you're worse than I am."

"I guess we don't either of us like the job very much. Got any of that booze left?"

The bottle was handed him, and he finished it and carefully placed it on the ground where it could not be broken.

"Well, come on; get busy," urged the other. They toiled and sweated, and after a little the stone began to move freely.

"Look out it don't fall right off!" called the one at the end of the bar. He stopped pushing and lay down, panting, in the shadow. The other went on to his knees and began feeling in the tomb.

"Is it there? Is it there?" anxiously asked the other.

"No, that Frenchy has fooled us"—and then with deep curses he began to get out.

"No, he hasn't! Look again. I don't believe he was lying."

The man in the tomb crouched down again and felt about. He suddenly started. "By ginger, I've found it! It's here!" and he arose to his feet to get out of the tomb.

"Look out; cheese it," the other warned.

The sound of a whistle growing louder and louder broke the stillness. A reporter was coming back from a night assignment, and went by while both the men hid in the shadow. The sound soon died away.

"All serene?" came the voice from the tomb.

"O. K. Come out; hand me the box," the other demanded.

A small black iron box was handed over the edge of the tomb, and the man followed.

The other immediately tried to open it, but was stopped by his companion.

"Don't be a fool; let's get out of this first. We can see what's in it when we get to the crib."

"Right you are; but it will be a close thing to get out of here, I guess."

For a moment they listened and not a sound was heard.

Then the whistle and roar of a fire engine making an early morning run to a fire, caused them both to duck for the shadows again.

The ghouls flattened themselves against the side of the tomb and held their breaths.

The roar and bustle passed by, and their breath came easier.

Just then the clock in the church tower struck two. Both men jumped, as though shot, but this died away also, to be succeeded by the deathly stillness.

They were getting very nervous, and the least noise startled them.

Grave-robbing is not a very pleasant business, even in daylight.

But at night, when detection seems almost sure, it is decidedly unpleasant.

As they lay there they realized that if they were caught it meant that the great and powerful Trinity Church Corporation would be their prosecutors, and that would mean the maximum sentence.

This thought was uppermost in their minds as they waited to be discovered.

But luck was to come their way.

A shift of men from the subway ditch knocked off just then to eat their early morning meal, and some of them crept into the churchyard to chat and smoke.

"Oh, look out or we'll be pinched," whispered the smaller of the men.

"No, no. It's our chance; wait till they go out," urged the other.

"For God's sake, be careful; steady now," and they arose to their feet and skulked among the graves, trying to reach the recumbent laborers without being seen.

At last they reached the shadow of the church itself, and then approached the men.

Now was to come the crucial test. Could they pass the laborers without being recognized as not being in their gang?

"Follow me, and do as I do," whispered the tall man.

He assumed the gait of those who work with the shovel, and pulled his slouch hat down over his eyes. The smaller man did likewise, and then they pushed among the laborers.

"Finished your grub, mates?" an Irishman asked.

"Yep, and we're going back into the hole," responded the shorter man.

"You're pretty early," commented the other; then turning to his fellows he observed, "I never saw them fellers before; some of the new ones, ain't they?"

"I guess so," responded a hoarse voice, "though they don't look like they're any good."

The two crooks reached the sidewalk, and then breathed more freely. A policeman was coming across the street to where they stood, and as he came up they greeted him.

For a moment he looked keenly at them, and then, after returning their salutation, went on.

"Another narrow shave," murmured the tall man, and then they both started up Broadway.

"Well, let's be thankful that we've gotten so far."

"Yes, but we've not done yet."

"I know that," answered the short man, "and we'll be fools to give up for the thousand. I know that's a good night's work, but——"

"But the count, or whatever he is, wouldn't want the box so badly if there wasn't something more than a thousand or two in it for him."

"Yes, you bet. This is a big thing, and I wouldn't have roped you into it except that I thought we'd do a——"

"Big business, eh? You remember the last time we did a big business together and what it led to?"

"It would have been all right, only for that cursed detective, Nick Carter."

"Yes, if he had not butted in. He fooled us, though."

"Well, of course he did. He don't belong to the regular police force, nor any of the detective bureaus."

"And what's worse, you can't ever tell where he is."

"No, damn him. One time he turns up looking like a minister, and the next time he's a crook."

"Well, I'd hate to have him on our trail to-night."

"He'd be fooled for once, I guess."

"You bet he would. But, look!"

"Where? Where?"

"Over there—there on the corner."

"Oh, gee, that's another of those fly coppers."

"He's coming this way. Let's run for it."

"All right; let's separate, though."

"All right; meet you at the same old place."

"Sneak."

They separated just as the policeman saw them.

He started toward them, but when they disappeared so fast he thought:

"Well, they're off my beat," and turned and walked back.

There was no real reason that the crooks should fly for shelter, except that, according to the old saying: "Conscience makes cowards of us all," and they felt guilty.

Their faces were very well known in the criminal records of this country, and several of the prisons had had the pleasure of their company for long terms.

Like all crooks, they called these forced sojourns at the State's expense "going to college," but they did not wish to take another course at Sing Sing University.

Realizing, as well as they did, the heinousness of their crime, they did not think that it would make the stir it did.

Within a day the rifled grave at St. Paul's had been visited by many thousand people, and had become a mystery that was the wonder of the whole country.

From Klondyke to the most southern port in South America men who had visited New York wondered and hoped for the detection of the vandals. From the police standpoint it was a peculiar affair. There seemed to be no motive whatever to ascribe for the act, and they were entirely at sea in the matter.

In the police annals there was only one case which was in any way a parallel of this. It was the theft of the body of the merchant prince, A. T. Stewart, many years before, from St. Mark's churchyard. But in that case there was a motive, and no mystery whatever.

Of course the police found any number of impossible clues, and in the end failed; but failed very quietly.

There was a man, however, who is known to all those interested in the wonderful work of detecting lawbreakers, who was destined to solve the mystery.

Nicholas Carter, the great and peerless detective, was to be this man.

He, however, was to admit that it was one of the most difficult cases he had ever had, and before its completion was to run a great risk and come as near losing his life as ever he could.

CHAPTER II.

NICK CARTER HEARS OF IT.

A few minutes before three, on the morning of the grave robbery, an old man was walking along Barclay Street. He seemed to be very old. In his hand was a cane, and

his steps were those of one who is not always sure of his footing.

His beard was gray, and an old slouch hat covered his white hair.

There was only one suspicious thing in his appearance—his eyes were keen as razors, and their gray was of the color which has always meant that a man was behind them.

As he passed different people, he looked at them, and in an instant seemed to discern why they were on the streets at that hour and all about them.

The old fellow hobbled down Barclay Street, and as he did so, he saw coming toward him a man who was in a great hurry.

The great black hat he wore obscured his face, and the coat collar which was turned up, further concealed his features.

He was a tall man, and his clothes were dirty, with what looked like mold and stone dust.

As he tried to pass the old man, he was stopped very forcibly.

The old fellow slipped and fell against him and almost knocked him down.

"What's the matter with you?" the younger man asked, very roughly.

"I am an old man, and I ain't had nothing to eat for two days, and I guess I'm pretty weak," was the old fellow's answer, in a quavering voice.

"I don't give a damn if you are. I don't give you a right to knock people down," the other retorted.

"Can't you give me a few cents to get a bite with? I'm so hungry."

"Wot do you take me for? I ain't no J. P. Morgan."

"But you can give me a cent or two. Please."

"Aw, go fish; I ain't no fool."

The old man had him by the coat sleeve and was begging and pleading.

The man tore his arm away and struck at him, but the blow was cleverly warded off.

When he did so, a small iron box he had under his other arm fell to the sidewalk with a clang, and he stooped quickly and picked it up.

Then, standing up, he cursed the old beggar roundly and turned away.

As he did so the old man muttered to himself: "The

Professor, eh? I wonder what's he doing out at this time of night?

"When that boy is wandering around loose there is usually something doing in the second-story line. And he had an iron box with him. Strange business, I'm afraid."

The old man went on a few steps farther and then stopped. "What a fool I was not to follow him. But I know where his crib is, and if I need him, well, I only have to go and get him."

He went along a little farther and then turned into a dark alley. A second later there came out of the alley a tall, well-built man. He was clean-shaven, and his gray eyes and resolute chin were those of Nick Carter.

The detective started for Broadway to take a car.

As he went along he thought of the tall man he had met whom he called the "Professor," and the hurry he seemed to be in.

As you may have surmised by this time, the old man and the detective were one and the same person. Carter had disguised himself in that way, hoping to catch some hold-up men, who had been operating in the downtown district lately, and had spent the night shadowing well-dressed citizens who looked as though they would be likely victims for this class of crooks.

So far he had been unsuccessful, and police reports showed that there had been no hold-ups that night, so that he did not feel that he had been fooled and lost his men.

The Professor was an old enemy of his. He had caught him with the goods on him on one memorable occasion, when the many burglaries he had perpetrated had the police guessing.

On that occasion the Professor had gone to Sing Sing for five years, but had had his term shortened by good behavior.

Carter did not know that he was loose, but despite the fact that it was almost four years since he had last seen him, he had no trouble in placing him.

As the car sped uptown Carter was more and more impressed with the fact that the meeting was one to be remembered.

Next day he was very glad that it had happened, for it gave him the first clew to the nine-days' wonder of the rifled grave in St. Paul's.

Nick Carter slept late that morning.

A little after eleven there was a knock at his door.

Carter sat up in bed and listened. The knock was repeated.

It was a knock that only one person in the world used.

"Come in, come in," Carter joyfully called; then as the door opened:

"How are you, Chick?"

"All right, Nick," answered the newcomer.

It was Chickering-Carter, and his handsome, good-natured face shone with the pleasure he experienced at meeting Nick again.

"Well, it does me good to see you. What's up?" asked his chief.

Nick Carter got out of bed as he spoke.

"What's up? Why, there's the deuce to pay."

"There is? Who's loose, now?" queried Nick, as he reached for his towels.

"There's the devil to pay, and——"

"You said that before; now what is really the matter?"

"Well, one of the graves down in St. Paul's, downtown, you know, was broken into last night."

"But no one has been buried there for ages."

"That's the funny part of it."

"I don't see what any one could want in one of those old graves. Why, there aren't even bones in most of them."

"I know that," Chick answered, "and I don't see why they broke it open."

"Whose grave was it?"

"Why, the stone with the inscription on is so old that you cannot read who was the stiff that was put away there."

"That's a strange business, altogether."

"You bet it is. And the Trinity Church bunch are wild about it. J. L. Stone, the millionaire, is one of them, and every one is wondering what he will do about it."

"Oh, he has enough money to secure the best police and detective assistance, and, of course, he will do it, and there is no doubt that he will——"

"Fail to get them; eh, Nick?" asked Chick, with a smile.

"That is what I was going to say, I will admit," returned Carter.

Nick Carter left the room to go to the bathroom, from which could be heard the sound of splashing as the detective took his cold bath. Chick sat in an easy-chair and smoked.

As he sat there he thought of the case they had been discussing. The more he thought, the more he saw that a police investigation would result in a failure, and would only give the crooks something to be amused at.

A few minutes later Nick Carter entered the room all aglow with the reaction of his bath.

"Well, son, what are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"I don't know," answered Chick, frankly; "the business is very mysterious, and I don't see how we can touch it."

"Who else can? Every detective and special in this burg is marked down by the crooks, and not one of them can move without being watched. Doesn't it look like a case for some one who can disguise himself so as not to be recognized even by—well, by Chick Carter; some one like Nicholas Carter, eh?" asked Nick, smiling.

"You bet! Right you are; but would you take it?" queried Chick.

"There's nothing to go on so far," said Nick, "and it is my private opinion that it is a lovely case. At least it has that look."

"Then why don't you go and ask for it?" demanded Chick.

"Well, I don't usually do that, do I?" Nick Carter was dressing now. Chick watched him as he did so, and was not surprised to see that he was putting on his working clothes.

That is, he was disguising himself.

When he had finished, instead of being Nick Carter, he looked like a foreign nobleman or something of that sort.

When he had done he bowed very ceremoniously to Chick.

"Monsieur Henri Renaud, at your service," he said.

"Well, I'd not know you in that rig, I'll admit," said Chick; "but what's the reason you're putting it on?"

"I am thinking of going after that bunch of green-goods merchants that have been doing the newly landed in this great and glorious country of ours."

"Oh, you are, eh?"

Just then there was a knock at the door, and the little colored boy who answered the door spoke up:

"Please, sir, here's a telegram for you."

"Get it, Chick. I don't want to be recognized."

Chick took it and brought it to his chief.

Nick Carter tore the envelope open and read the message.

"Whew, we are up against it. Look at this," and he tossed it to Chick. Chick read it aloud:

"No. — West Eighth Street.

"Can you come to my office at once? Have important business to discuss with you. J. L. STONE."

"Well, well; it has come already, and I am glad of it."

"In some way or other I expected that I would hear from that case. It looks so like my kind of a job," said Nick.

"Oh, I am glad; and you're going downtown now?" asked Chick.

Nick smiled at the young fellow's eagerness.

"I guess I will; don't you want to come?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I do."

"All right; but get some disguise or other on. I will need you in this matter before it is settled, if I am not mistaken."

"You will? It is a long time since you've let me work with you."

The young detective's face showed plainly that the honor was very dear to him, and as he disguised himself he whistled with sheer happiness. When he had done he looked like a foreigner, also.

The policeman on the corner smiled as they went by. "Some of those fool Frenchies," they heard him mutter. "That's a good tribute to our skill," laughed Nick, and then they boarded a car.

Going downtown they discussed the matter, and found that most of the talk in the car was about the same thing.

A little while later they left the car at Wall-Street, and in a minute or two found themselves at J. L. Stone's office.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT STONE HAD TO SAY.

At the Drexel Building they were asked for their cards and given the information beforehand that Mr. Stone was very busy.

"Never mind that," Nick answered, "take this to him." And he handed the clerk the telegram.

A moment later the boy returned and said that Mr. Stone would see them immediately. "This way, please."

They were shown into the private office of the great financier.

Mr. Stone came in and looked at them and started to go out again. He did not recognize Nick or his assistant.

"It's all right, Mr. Stone," spoke up Nick, "I am Carter."

"You are? You don't look like him. I know Nicholas Carter, and you——"

"That's all right; look now."

With a sweeping gesture the detective removed his disguise.

"Oh, oh! I ought to have thought of that! I did not expect——"

"That I would come disguised?"

"No."

"Well, I did so because, as you know, I am pretty well known down in this district since that last little affair."

"When you recovered those United States Treasury bonds that had been stolen?"

"Yes, sir. Since then I have seldom come down here except in disguise."

"Well, let's get to the bottom of this business; but who's your friend?"

"Mr. Stone, this is Chick Carter, my most valued assistant. He will help me in this affair."

"But will you need him?"

"I am afraid I shall! This looks like a very hard case."

"All right, if you can vouch for him."

"I'd trust him with my life."

"That's good. Well, as you know by this time——"

"A grave in St. Paul's was broken open last night."

"That's it; and as a member of the Trinity Church Corporation, I am to employ you to find who did the deed, and why."

"So I surmised when I received your telegram."

"What are your terms?"

"What do you offer?"

"Of course we wish to have the affair conducted as cheaply as possible," and Stone smiled.

"I understand that; but what do you offer?"

"Well, how would twenty-five thousand do?"

Carter was surprised at the figure, but like a true detective, did not show it.

"Very well; but if I fail I won't charge you a cent except, of——"

"Your expenses?"

"I was going to say that."

"Well, we'll call the matter settled. Now to get to the case."

"I wish to ask a few questions about the grave."

"I cannot tell you much about that. The sexton will have all the information relating to it that is extant."

"All right, I'll see him. But have you any idea what was the motive?"

"None, whatever. I cannot even hazard a guess."

"Well, let us suppose, for the sake of argument, we'll say——"

"But, Mr. Carter, you don't usually work on theories. From my small experience of your methods, you catch the criminal first and then do your theorizing."

"That may be so," said Nick, smiling, "but to vary the performance let us suppose a case."

"Go ahead."

"This grave is very old. There is no body in it; but there may have been jewels or some secret that was buried with the body, and some person or persons have gotten wise to the fact."

"And rifled it to get the jewels?"

"Yes, that's one idea; another is that there may have been deeds in the tomb which would be of great value. Now if it dates from Revolutionary times there is little doubt that it is deeds that the robbers were after. As you know, when the British took New York, many of the first families hid their jewels and valuable papers in that way, and——"

"So they did; but why did they not recover them before this?"

"Perhaps the family was wiped out in the subsequent battles of the war. Perhaps only the women were left, and they had not been apprised of the hiding place. Perhaps—but there are very many suppositions which may be advanced."

"I realize that."

"And I think we had better get to work instead of talking about it."

"I think so, too."

"Well, good-by, Mr. Stone; we are going to the churchyard, now."

"Good-by, and good luck; but when do we hear from you?"

"As soon as I have something to tell."

"That means when it is all over."

"And I have found the vandals."

"Good-by."

The detectives walked out and went through the offices. As they did so a junior clerk looked up from his ledger and muttered: "There go some of the foreign investors." Nick Carter heard him and smiled. "And to think that boy knows me well," he said; "but these disguises are good, eh, Chick?"

"They certainly are," answered his junior; "I'd go anywhere and not get spotted. But we have never been found out yet, have we?"

"Not often."

By this time they had reached the churchyard and entered.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE CHURCHYARD.

Instead of going directly to the rifled grave, Nick Carter asked for the sexton.

That worthy had been pestered with reporters all the morning, and sent to say that he was too busy to see them.

"The chump," muttered Nick, and he went to the sexton's office.

At first the man refused to listen to him.

However, when he heard Stone's name mentioned, he changed his tune. Nick introduced himself as a detective employed by the great financier to ferret out the mystery, but did not say who he was.

The sexton was all graciousness in an instant, and offered him all the assistance in his power.

Nick asked him a number of questions relative to the grave.

"I want to know who is buried in that tomb?" was the first.

"I am not very sure about any of the very old graves here."

"But you surely can give me some information of this one."

"I will look it up. You know many years ago there was a fire here which destroyed most of the records, and I am afraid that this one is unmarked."

"Well, look it up."

The sexton went to a large safe, and brought forth a number of very old and musty books.

He looked through them several times, and at length with a sigh of relief said: "I think this is it," and he read:

"Oct. 12, 1776, Maj. James Montresor, of the Conti-

mental army, was buried in the Montresor family plot with military honors. He was shot at the battle of—' But here the record leaves off. I have not the least doubt that he was the person last buried in that tomb," added the sexton.

"That's not very much information," said Nick.

"At least we have the name, though," answered Chick.

"Yes, that's something. Now let us go and look at the grave."

The detectives went out, and soon were standing beside the desecrated tomb, which seemed to look at them with mute reproach.

The top slab was almost entirely off, showing the bare inside. Nick groped in it, and brought out a belt buckle, such as was worn by officers in the Continental army.

"That settles it. The major was the stiff that found his last resting place here," he said, and then dropped to his knees, and began to examine the ground about it.

His search seemed to reveal nothing, and the expressive features of the detective plainly showed disappointment.

"There have been too many people around here to see any footprints," he said, disgustingly.

Nick arose to his feet and commenced brushing the mold and stone dust from his trousers. He suddenly stopped.

"Chick, notice this dirt; see it?"

"Well, what of it?"

"Last night I met a crook, an old friend of mine, and his clothes were covered with it."

"What! You mean to say you saw a man who had this dirt on him?"

"I certainly did. It was the Professor. You remember him?"

"That fellow you had sent up about five years ago?"

"That's the man; he got out recently on good behavior or some stunt of that kind."

"I didn't know that."

"Yes, he's out, and I shouldn't wonder if he knows more about this than is good for him."

"It's the sort of work he'd do quick enough if there were sufficient to gain by it."

"But, Chick, he must have had a pal! No one man could move this stone alone."

"That's right. When did you meet him?"

"He was running up Barclay Street. Running as though he were legging it."

"No wonder; he wanted to get as far away as possible before the discovery was made."

"I think you are getting to be a good guesser, Chick. Some day you will be a great detective, eh?"

Chick flushed with pleasure at the praise he knew his chief's jollying him. "I hope to succeed you some day, Nick," he said.

"That's pleasant. When do you expect me to shuffle off, eh?"

"I didn't mean that. You know it."

"Well, Chick, my boy, this is very pleasant, but it is not solving this mystery, and that's what we're after."

"That's right, Nick. What do you want me to do?"

"As yet I don't know. I am going to look up the Professor, and see if there is anything doing there."

"Where do I come in?"

"Not yet, little man. But don't be disappointed. You will have all you can attend to later, I fear."

"Well, I hope so. I want to be working with you! When I do, I don't care what happens."

Nick Carter smiled at his junior, and any one who knew him would have seen that he was very pleased.

"What shall I do, now?" asked Chick.

"You had better make a date to meet me at my rooms to-night, and we will confer. If there are any more ends of this business in sight, then we will decide which we are each to follow. Until then, adieu."

"All right. I'll be there. So long," and the young fellow went out of the graveyard and up Broadway.

As Nicolas Carter stood for a moment looking after his retreating form, he muttered: "True as steel," and then commenced thinking of the case in hand.

It was certainly a very mysterious one.

Who had opened the grave was not so difficult a question, as he had a very clear idea that the Professor was mixed up in the affair. But why should a crook of his standing in the fraternity go into danger to open an old— a century old—grave in St. Paul's? The more he thought of it the more he was convinced that the grave robber had been actuated by some motive that was far beyond his knowledge.

There was no doubt that he had an accomplice, and that made the matter more complex. Two men would not go into a business like this unless it paid, and then the question came, who was doing the paying?

The old theory of valuable deeds that would give title to

most curious and the other one of jewels being in the tomb, both came to his mind. But how would the Professor know about such things? Carter saw that there must be some one who was onto the value of the deeds or whatever was taken from the tomb, and that led him to believe that there were others to deal with besides the few crooks who broke into the grave.

He then decided that after he found out what the Professor was doing he would see what the Montrosses amounted to, and perhaps that would give him a few more clues.

All the time Nick Carter was thinking he sat on the steps of the side door of the church, in the shade.

As he sat there he noticed a man and woman come in and wander to the grave.

The man was tall and had the bearing of a military man. His well-waxed mustache was black and his clothes, especially the hat, proclaimed him a foreigner.

One might have taken him for a foreign nobleman, and for a moment Carter smiled to think that he also looked like the stranger. His attention was taken by the woman, the next instant.

She was tall, and even through her veil it could be seen that she was beautiful, although she was dark like her companion.

They went directly to the grave, and Carter could see that they were deeply interested in it.

The man began speaking volubly in a low tone, and his companion listened eagerly. Instinctively Carter felt that these people concerned him, and he decided that he must hear what the man was saying.

He commenced to wander over toward them, as though he, too, were a onlooker and impelled only by idle curiosity. The man was speaking in French, and the words: "And that is where it lay hid all these many years"—and the answer: "Yes, Claude, but by your cleverness—" And she looked up and saw Carter and stopped.

She thought he was another foreigner like themselves, and therefore to be regarded with suspicion.

Carter examined the grave as though he was seeing it for the first time, and then slowly walked to the sidewalk.

"I am sure that man heard what we were saying," the woman breathlessly exclaimed.

"What if he did? It won't do him any good," sneered the man.

"No, but my dear Claude, this is a very risky business, is it not? And if we are caught we would go to jail."

"Oh, yes, it is risky; but if I am caught I shall go to jail, not you, my dear."

"But if you were taken away what would become of me?"

"Oh, well, don't let us take such a pessimistic view of the matter. We are not going to be caught, and if we were, what could be proved?"

"Not much, in fact."

"Then, my dear, don't worry. Let us now go home. We have seen enough of this great city for one day."

Carter was standing on the corner as they drove by in a cab which had waited for them at the entrance of the church.

He wanted to know very much where they were going, as the few words he had heard had set him wondering.

On the spur of the moment he took a Broadway car, hoping to keep the cab in sight so long as it kept on that thoroughfare.

His good luck held true. The cab kept on Broadway until Fortieth Street, and then it turned west.

Carter hopped off the car and followed it.

After driving two blocks it stopped, and the man and woman got out and went into a house on the left-hand side.

Carter wandered by a minute later, and carefully noted the number. As he made a note of it, he remembered that this was one of the most notorious gambling dens in the city until a few weeks before, when it had been raided.

"That's strange. I thought that place was closed up," he muttered. He had reached the corner, and found a policeman standing there watching some newsboys shoot "craps."

When he saw Carter, he promptly scattered the game, and when the detective addressed him he was very indignant over the business.

"You want to know who's living in Diamond Annie's old place? Well, they seem to be furriners, and they are making their home there."

"Well, is the place shut up?"

"Sure; there's no more games there, or anywhere else in this precinct."

"That's a shame, isn't it?" said Carter, sympathizing with the bluecoat's misfortune. He was lamenting the

that there was no more "graft" where he could get his hands on it.

Carter asked him one or two more questions about nothing in particular and then went on.

He decided that the best thing to do would be to look up the Professor and see what he had to do with the present robbery.

CHAPTER V.

SHADOWING THE PROFESSOR.

A little while later there emerged from Nick Carter's rooms a man who looked like a tramp or a bum.

His clothes were soiled and stained, his hat was a very old derby, and his shoes had seen all the better days that were coming to them. Taken all in all the man was one of the type you see on the benches in the parks or part loafing on the side streets.

Of course it was Nick Carter, but even the well-known white chin was hidden in a growth of whiskers, which would have done credit to Dowie.

He crossed over to the Eighth Avenue car line, and took a trolley to the Battery.

Once down there he realized that he was up against it to remember where the Professor and his crowd hung out.

It was never easy to find that person, but now, when he had been away he felt it was harder than ever.

Carter walked along the Battery wharves and he had to have a look at a place or two he knew on the East Side where crowds congregated. He was making all the time that was consistent with his disguise when he almost stumbled over a woman, who turned in her tracks and eyed him for a clumsy loafer.

Carter answered her back in the same language, for he had to talk to fit his disguise as well as look it.

She told him what she thought of him and then walked on.

He lost out a woman in following her.

But the woman was his friend of his. When she was caught she was known as the "Queen of the Green," and Carter had tried to get her sent to jail when he had caught a band of operators, but had failed. For she had escaped that she married, or at least it was said she did. Her husband was known to the authorities as the "Boss" and was in effect the will of him.

Now Carter was interested because he remembered that the Rat and the Professor were always pals, and one seldom if ever went into anything without the other.

Carter hoped that the woman would lead him to the haunt of these two birds of prey, and that he might find his grave robbers when he got there. The woman went across to the elevated, and took the Second Avenue car. Carter followed her, and entered the same car, which was crowded.

At Grand Street she got off and he followed her.

It was beginning to get dark then, and as that part of town is not any too well lighted he had little difficulty in following her without being seen.

At a tenement which looked in the last stages of decay she stopped, and after speaking to some neighbors entered and commenced to climb the stairs. Carter gave her a lead of a flight and crept after her. At the very top she stopped, and Carter heard her ask to be let in a door, which creaked dismally when it was opened.

A second later Carter was listening at it.

There were many voices within, and they all greeted the woman in the heartiest manner.

Carter listened, and at last heard only three distinct voices.

"So you got the box, did you?" a voice asked.

"Who said we got it?" responded a voice, which the detective recognized as that of the Professor.

"Well, that's what you went for, ain't it?"

"Well, we did get it; but don't be in a hurry," came the Professor's voice.

"Have you looked into it yet?"

"Yes, and we found a whole bunch of papers, but they're nearly all in some foreign language—the Rat's wife here says that it's French."

"That's what it ought to be. The count said——"

"Oh, hell, you and your count make me tired, Slick. I don't believe there is a count."

"You didn't believe about the box, either, did you?"

"That's all right; but I'll bet you got wise to it, and there ain't no count."

"Aw, you're talking through your hat, Professor; the Rat here knows more about it than you, and he ain't bawling that he wants a count."

"I don't want no count. I just say you're working the count down on me to get me to do what they want. I'm not."

"Well, you'll get your money, and a thousand apiece is a whole heap to make for a few minutes' work."

"Yes, and nothing but about forty years if you get caught. Awful high wages for that, ain't it?"

"Well, don't let us scrap. I came here to get the box, and—"

"Well, wouldn't that jar you?" asked the voice, which Carter realized must belong to the Rat.

"Yes, he thinks he's running this, I guess. Look here, Slick, if you'll show us your count, and let us talk with him, perhaps there'll be something doing in the line of a little iron box we know of."

"But he relies on me to get it for him."

"Oh, I see. You get the box and Mr. Count has to pay a little extra to get it from you. I guess we'd better get that extra money, eh, Rat?"

"You bet. We're the boys that can use it."

Just then the voice of the woman broke in from another room. Carter judged: "Can't some of you fancy guys come in here and cook a little dope for me? My hand shakes and I can't get it to work."

"All right, I'm coming," answered the Rat, and as he left the other two: "Don't let him bunco you, Prof.," he admonished.

The Professor wanted to know all about the game which he and the Rat had commenced to play when they dug up the box.

"Look here, Slick," he said, "you want that box, don't you?"

"You promised it to me."

"Oh, I know all that; but we've decided that you get it when we are put wise to the whole game and no sooner."

"But I can't tell you the whole game. I don't know it myself."

"Aw, rats, you don't. Then we want to know the name of this count of yours—the fake count, eh?"

"He ain't no fake, Professor. He'll pay you that thousand as soon as he gets the box, and no fakir would do that."

"Well, look here. You produce the count and we'll drag out the box. The whole thing is this: We know you too well to trade with you. We'll trade with him, but not with you, see?"

"Yes, I see, and I think that you're unjust."

"Unjust," the Professor laughed. "Poor boy, I am unjust, you say?"

Just then the Rat rejoined them.

"What's the row, now?" he asked. "The old lady is having her smoke."

"Yes, and some of these days she'll have one long, last smoke, and then there won't be any more woman left."

"Well, she's happy when she's smoking, so I ain't going to stop her."

"Say, Rat, let's give Slick here a pipe and let him smoke a bit. Perhaps he'd dream he had that box and that he'd played us for suckers. Eh, Slick, old man?"

"I don't want to play you for suckers."

"Oh, no! We know that."

"Honest Injun! I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll have you meet the count, and you can see for yourselves, and he can pay you also."

"That's all right about his paying us; but we want some money now."

"I haven't any to give you! I gave you some last night."

"Fifty apiece, eh; that was too much. We bought automobiles each, and as we had to have some repairs made the money was almost used up."

"Well, I can't give you any now."

"All right, but how about this meeting with your count? Remember, no count, no box."

"All right. I will produce a count if you produce the box."

"A count?"

"Yes, the French count I have been speaking of all the time."

"You're a slippery slob, Slick, and if you do us dirt you'll never get out of this town alive, I tell you."

"Who wants to do you dirt?"

"Well, the last deal we worked together I remember that I got all the work and you tried to do me out of any of the dough."

"That was because I didn't know you then."

"Oh, yes, and now you are afraid, eh?"

"That's all right, Professor. Now look here, Slick," broke in the Rat, "when and where do we meet this count of yours?"

"I'll tell you! You remember the gambling house that used to be run by Diamond Annie up on Fortieth Street?"

"Of course we do! Rat dealt there for a time."

"Well, he is staying there with his wife. He does not

that it known, of course, and the police are still watching her place."

"That's all right. We know the old secret entrance, and no one will see us enter. You remember it eh, Professor?"

"Do I? Well, I guess! The time the house was pulled I made my get-away through it."

"Well, you be there at about ten o'clock and we'll finish the business up. Don't forget the box."

"We won't; and don't you forget the count, either."

"I won't. He lives there, and I don't see how I could," said Slick laughed.

After he heard a chair pushed back from the table, and he reasoned that Slick was getting ready to leave.

As he did not want to be caught in the hall, the detective quickly descended the stairs.

A few moments later the well-known figure of Sam Slick, the worst green-goods operator in New York, followed him.

Carter was hanging on the other side of the street, and he started when he saw Slick.

"This is a big game," he said, to himself; "that crook can't go in for any little ones."

Slick walked rapidly away and Carter followed him. He did not intend to shadow him, as he had learned all he needed for the present. The meeting in the evening would be the affair at which he would get the final information which he hoped would reveal the whole plot and allow him to report to his boss.

Slick took a car uptown as Carter expected he would, and he followed suit.

When Nick reached his rooms he found Chick waiting his arrival impatiently and wondering when he would turn up.

As Nick changed his disguise he told the younger detective all he had learned, and then sent him off to shadow the two grave robbers. "Follow them to the house in West Fourth street, and when they come out follow them back to their room. If possible in any way pick the box up. At any rate, be kept here, remember, and if you don't see me leave a note telling all you have seen. Now you had better change your disguise. That one will be too conspicuous down in Mulberry Bend."

Chick did as he was told, and in a few minutes looked like a thief.

"I'd run you in on suspicion if I met you on a dark

night," said Nick, smiling. "You will do, though. You remember the advice?"

"Yes, sir, I do. Well, good luck, Nick."

"The same to you, my boy," said Nick, and the younger detective went out.

CHAPTER VI.

BUYING THE BOX—A HARD BARGAIN.

Nick Carter had always had a suspicion that the gambling house on West Fortieth Street had a secret passage, because of the very few that were caught when it was raided.

Of those who ran the place not one was pinched, and the police could vouch for the fact that not one escaped through the doors or windows. A little before ten a man dressed more like a ragpicker than anything else and wearing the long beard which is usually seen among that craft, wandered down the alley behind a row of houses on West Fortieth Street. He had a sack on his back, and went along with his eyes on the ground. Now and then he stopped to gather up some fragment.

When he came opposite the gambling house he stopped and pretended to be very busy.

He scraped around near the gate in the alley fence, and as no one seemed to be watching him he picked up what looked like a blanket and crammed it in his sack.

Then he took his pick and struck several times viciously at the place the blanket had covered.

There was no response beyond that which earth usually gives out.

"Fooled," he muttered, in a very low voice.

He looked up and saw two figures enter the alley at the upper end. They were quite clear against the electric light, and he recognized them as the Professor and the Rat.

Realizing that they were coming to where he stood, Carter, for it was he, started in the other direction.

He did not hurry—that would have excited suspicion.

He walked along, swinging his pick, and stopped once to pick some rubbish up and put it in his sack.

"Who the devil's that?" demanded the Rat.

"Some old beggar—a ragpicker, I guess," answered his pal.

"Well, he was getting too numerous around this gate. He can't be out."

"Oh, heavens! How could he be?"

Carter watched the two men from the shadow at the end of the alley and saw them enter the yard.

He ran along the fence, crouched down so as not to be seen, and got to the gate before they were very far inside.

About twenty feet from the gate there was a shed which looked like the regular coal shed that is customary in the back yards of these houses. The men looked around, and then stooping to avoid the low doorway, entered.

Carter followed them into the place, and was so close behind that he saw the section of floor shift back into place as they fixed it from beneath.

He waited for about ten minutes, but could do so no longer. The instinct of the detective told him that the coast was clear and that he could follow with safety.

However, force of habit made him loosen his revolver in the shoulder holster in which he always carried it.

The floor yielded easily, showing that it must be in constant use. Carter found himself in a passage which was bricked up and was quite large enough for him to stand at his full height, and the width was that of two men.

He did not spend much time investigating, as he thought that there'd be things doing at the end of the passage which would interest him more. When he got to the end he found a number of steps.

There were enough of them to assure him that he was on the level with the second floor of the house when he reached the top.

As he ascended them he saw a beam of light, which seemed to shine from the wall into the shaft.

Very quietly he reached the topmost steps and then found that the light came from what looked at first like a slit in the wall.

He examined it more closely, and then saw that it was behind a large picture, which was placed in such a manner that it could be raised and allow a person to pass into the room.

It had not been lowered quite enough when the crooks entered, and was slightly ajar like a door.

Carter glued his eyes to the crack and saw the Professor, the Rat, Sam Slick and the gentleman whom he had seen in St. Paul's churchyard, all sitting around a table.

The Professor had his back turned to Carter, and he could see that he held an iron box on his knees.

With a start the detective recognized it as the box he had seen the night he had begged from the Professor—the night the grave was robbed.

His surprise at the fourth member of this infamous band was sincere. He did not dream that the courtly looking gentleman of the morning could be an associate of a band of crooks, but it seemed to be so.

As he was thinking of these things the voice of Sam Slick broke in:

"Count, the gentlemen will not give up the box to me! They said——"

"We said," interrupted the Professor, "that we would do business with the main squeeze and with no other."

"Ze main squeeze. Vat does he mean?" asked the count.

"He means that he wants to do business with the chief in this affair," answered Slick, sulkily.

"Yes, that's the game. I don't want no fellows butting in wot are likely to do me dirt," the Professor said.

"To do you ze dirt. *Helas*, but this English language is von terrible thing. Vat does he mean?" the count asked.

"He means that he does not want to be cheated."

"Oh, I see. But vy does he think he vill be cheated?"

"Oh, that's a peculiarity of his. But, say, Professor, cut out the slang. 'We'll never get this talky-talk ended if you don't.'"

"All right, and what's more I'll get right down to business."

"That's the stuff," broke in the Rat.

Carter echoed his sentiments. He also was getting tired of hot air.

"Now, look here, Count Bechet, you hired us through Mr. Slick to get a certain iron box for you, didn't you?"

"*Ouï ouï!* I most certainly did, and have you him?"

"Oh, yes, we've got it; but at present we don't want to give it up."

"*Mon Dieu*, but I have paid for it. Vy am I not to have eet?"

"You've paid for it? Why, we didn't get the money."

"No, no; how eez that, monsieur?" the count asked, turning to Slick.

"I wanted to pay them and they said they would only deal with you, so I kept the money. Here it is, now," answered that worthy.

The count grabbed the money, as though he expected to see it fly away.

"Gentlemen, I must apologize. Zis money I did intend for you."

"How much have you there?" interrupted the Professor.

"There eez the two thousand each, as you said you must have. You remember, eh?"

The Professor and the Rat looked at each other, and then at Slick, and there was murder in the last glance.

"It eez a great deal of money to pay for a leetle job like that, is it not?"

"No, sir," answered the Rat; "if you get caught it means a good many years in prison, and I don't think it is enough."

"Nor do I," chimed in the Professor; "that job put us in a good deal of danger, count, and it is wonderful how we escaped."

Carter smiled when he heard this. They had not escaped yet.

But the conversation went on.

"Have you ze box wit' you?" asked the count.

"Yes, we have, and we'll give it up the moment you hand over the money."

"All right, that is easy, eh?" and the count smiled.

"Yes, very easy," answered the Professor, and he smiled. The Rat caught the infection and he smiled, too. Sam Slick, however, looked pretty green and his smile was a very sickly one.

He was beginning to see the nice fat commission he had hoped to get out of the business go up in thin air.

He had hoped to hold back half of the money that Count Dechet had given him, and also to get his own commission from him.

Now he was afraid he'd get neither.

Carter understood all these things as he watched his face. "That man will turn State's evidence when I get him," he muttered, "just to get square."

The count was counting bills on the table, and Carter could see that they were mostly in the shape of one-hundred-dollar gold certificates.

He arranged a neat pile in front of him and then: "The law, gentlemen," he said.

"All right, here it is," answered the Professor, bringing it up from under the table.

The count reached for it, his fingers trembling with eagerness.

"*Merci, merci*, gentlemen. I am very much obliged to you."

"Well, that's done," said the Professor.

He rose to his feet and the Rat did so also.

"What, you are going, gentlemen?" asked the count.

"Yes, I guess we'd better," said the Rat.

Sam Slick nodded his approval.

"But before you go you must have one little drink with me," said the nobleman.

He went to a cupboard in the wall and brought out glasses and a bottle.

The men poured their different portions and then before they drank the count proposed a toast.

"Here's death to all who cross our wills," and they all drank as though they highly approved.

"That means Nick Carter for mine," said the Professor.

Carter jumped at the mention of his name.

He was preparing to get out of the secret passage as soon as he could, and started when he heard the Rat speak.

"Say, let's go out by the door. I don't like that hole," he said.

"All right! I don't like it very much myself," added the Professor.

That suited Carter, because he wanted to see what was in the box, and hoped that the count would open it in the room where he was so he could see.

CHAPTER VII.

"DON'T HURT THE GIRL."

The Rat led the way and they all left the room.

The count had the box under his arm, and Carter's hopes fell.

However, in a moment he returned accompanied by Slick.

They closed the door behind them and Slick turned the key.

The count placed the box on the table.

He then produced a cold chisel and after a struggle succeeded in opening it.

There was a mass of old and yellow papers in it.

The count pulled them out and commenced to read.

They were all in French, and he read aloud in a droning voice.

"Say, what are they all about? Are they the ones you thought?" asked Slick.

"Yes, they seem to be," answered the count, abstractedly.

He went on reading, and then suddenly exclaimed: "It is there—it is there!"

"What is?" asked Slick.

"The treasure—the money and jewels."

"What money?"

The count looked at his accomplice a moment, and then said quickly:

"Money; did I say money?"

"Yes, you did."

"I was crazy. I must have been thinking of the two thousand."

"Two thousand, nothing. You said there was jewels."

"Jewels; why, I must have been off my head. These papers only relate to an estate in my town at home."

"Oh, yes. You know they tell about some jewels and money that's hid somewhere, and I want to know about them."

"You want to know?"

"Yes."

Just then there was a knock at the door and a woman's voice demanded admittance.

"Just a moment, Julie; a moment," the count said.

He bundled the papers back into the box and then shoved it into the closet and went to the door.

A woman came in. A tall young woman of surpassing beauty.

She was dark and slender, and when Carter saw her he recognized her. She was the lady who had been with the count when he went to see the grave in the churchyard.

"Oh, Claude—" He looked at her sharply. "Oh, Emil, Emil, have you found the papers?"

"No not yet, my dear Julie," he answered.

"But those horrid men who went out a moment ago; did they not bring you the box?"

"No, they were here on a matter which concerns it, but here—"

"Did they find it, didn't they?"

"They did not; there was nothing in the grave."

"Nothing?"

"No; and I had to give them four thousand dollars for opening it, too."

"Oh, what a shame. I am so sorry," and she came over and put her hand in his.

"Yes, it is a shame; but we may succeed yet."

"I wish we could, and then, back to Paris. Eh, Emil?"

"Yes, dear; but I am forgetting—what has become of the girl? Is she all right?"

"She still sleeps; the drug was too strong."

"No, it was not. She will be all right soon," and he exchanged a sinister glance with Slick.

"Oh, yes, it will work off soon, and then she won't even feel any bad effects," that gentleman added, smiling.

Carter thought for a moment. So there was a girl in the affair, also.

"I wonder where she comes in?" he thought.

Just then there was the muffled rumbling of a carriage outside.

It stopped, and Sam Slick said: "There's our rig, count."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I told them to bring it here at about this time."

"That's good."

"What do you want a carriage for, dear?" asked the woman.

"Why, we are going to take the girl where she won't bother us any more," Slick replied.

"But you are not going to hurt her?" she queried, anxiously.

"No, no; of course not," the count replied.

"I am afraid. I will not let her go unless you both promise me on your words of honor that—"

"We won't hurt her—of course not."

"But you must swear it. You must swear it."

"All right, dear, we swear; don't we, Mr. Slick?"

"Yes, of course. I wouldn't hurt a hair of her head for all the money in the world."

"Then she is in my room."

"Wrap her up warmly and we will take her."

The woman left the room.

"Have you the boat ready?" asked the count, anxiously.

"Yes, it is ready."

"Where is it?"

"At the foot of Thirty-fourth Street."

"But is not that a very populous place?"

"Not at this time of night; there's no one there now."

"All right."

"She is ready," called Julie, from the next room.

Both men arose and went out. Before they left, however, they took stiff drinks from the bottle.

"Just to keep the cold out," said Slick, with a ghastly smile.

Carter left his post and hurried to the end of the passage.

As he climbed out a figure obstructed the passage.

Carter jumped at it and fastened his hands in the throat.

There was a struggle and then: "Nick, Nick, don't you know me?" came to his startled ears.

"For Heaven's sake, Chick, I didn't think it was you."

"Well, you nearly strangled me; but I have a cable for you. Here it is." He handed Nick a paper.

Nick shoved it in his pocket.

"Those crooks went out the front door, Chick. I want you to——"

"To follow them. All right."

"Yes, that's it. You know where they hang out?"

"Yes, I have found the place."

"Well, so long. I am in a hurry. I have to go to the foot of Thirty-fourth Street, West."

"All right, Nick, good-by."

The detectives started for the street together, and as they reached it a carriage went by driving fast.

Nick recognized the driver as Sam Slick.

Carter rushed to the nearest car line and started to follow—that is, for the same destination.

As the car sped down the avenue he pulled the cable out of his pocket and read it: "The count you speak of is a named assassin. He left here about ten days ago. He is the Baron Claude de Rheanan, and was under police surveillance when he left."

Signed

"PERFECT OF POLICE,
"Paris."

"So that's the fellow, eh? I thought he was an old hand. Now I wonder what he is doing with that young lady?"

Just then it was necessary to transfer.

As the cross-town car was running the last few blocks which brought it down to the foot of Thirty-fourth Street it passed a carriage.

Carter crossed the driver's foot, and was very glad to find that it was Sam Slick.

The detective had been afraid that he would be too late.

He knew, however, that they would not dare to drive very fast because the police would stop them, and that was why he felt that a car was fast enough to keep up with them.

Nevertheless, he was very much relieved when he saw the carriage. Nick Carter ran the half block from where the car passes the end of Thirty-fourth Street to the landing stage.

CHAPTER VIII.

MURDER ON THE RIVER.

There was complete darkness, and he lurked in the shadow of the dock and waited.

But not for long.

In about a minute he heard the carriage drive up above him.

It stopped, and he heard the men move about.

"Here, give me a hand—she's not very light," the voice of the baron spoke up.

"All right; I'm with you," answered Slick.

There were several low moans and a muffled cry.

"She must be coming to—hurry, hurry," said the baron, anxiously.

"No, she won't come to; why, she had enough dope to kill a man."

"We don't want a struggle. If she cries out——"

"Shove this in her mouth."

Carter heard the heartless villains gag the girl, who choked over the dirty rag they had forced into her mouth.

"Pick her up—come on, give me a hand," said the baron.

Carter heard them pick her up, and in a moment he saw them coming down the landing steps.

He hesitated to rush out and rescue her.

"What will we do if we are seen?" asked Slick.

"If we are seen! What did I give you the knife and revolver for, you fool?" answered the baron.

"Of course—I did not think of that."

They had reached the float, and Slick let the girl's feet down.

"Hold her while I get the boat."

He brushed by Carter and went along the float.

A moment later Carter heard him get into a boat, and then he rowed to where the baron was holding the girl.

Carter then realized that if he was to follow he must get a boat also.

But a boat would be noticed.

He commenced undressing.

A moment later he was in the water.

There was an old hawser rope hanging down from a pile, and he clutched that and hung there.

The baron lifted the girl to her feet.

Sam Slick took her feet, and bending down, pulled the boat close to the float.

Nick Carter, crouching in the icy water alongside the dock, saw the unconscious form of the girl placed in the boat by the baron and his accomplice.

With a few powerful strokes the boat was out into the stream.

Carter did not hesitate a moment.

Swimming noiselessly, he was after it.

As it passed him, he heard Slick mutter: "Well, I'll have earned that money when we are done this job."

"Never mind about that—let's hurry and get it over," answered the baron, in muffled tones.

They were well out into the stream now.

Carter was swimming as hard as he could, and the tide was very strong.

When they reached the middle of the river, the rowing ceased.

The boat drifted a moment, and Carter was able to get near.

There was a splash.

Then they commenced rowing as fast as they could for some.

Carter saw the boat coming toward him, and fearing discovery, leaped, and while he was under water they went by.

As soon as he came up he swam quickly to the spot where he had heard the splash.

There was no sign of the girl.

Carter swam about, and then drifted down with the tide.

Just as he was beginning to despair, his hand struck something.

He reached out, and found to his great joy that it was the body of the girl.

The detective turned on his back and took hold of her as a life-saver does a drowned person, and commenced to struggle for shore.

The water was very cold, and he had been in it for some time.

His strength was failing fast.

The strong tide was carrying him down very rapidly, and he realized that it would be impossible to reach the shore.

Nevertheless he held on, grimly resolved that he would die sooner than give up.

His strokes were becoming weaker and weaker, and the girl seemed to be growing heavier and heavier.

It was only a question of a few minutes now, and then the end.

Nick Carter, the peerless detective, was facing death, and facing it with a stanch bearing; he had always a brave heart.

His life would be given to save one of his fellow creatures, and to his mind there was no nobler death.

The thought that he could not catch the murderers was the only regret that he had.

As he was on the point of giving out, he heard the puffing of a launch.

With a last effort, he raised himself in the water and saw that it was coming upstream and heading right for him.

He commenced calling "Help! help! help!" but his voice was very weak. But the good fortune which always was his came to the rescue. The launch came within a few feet of him, and the lookout saw the figures in the water.

To take them aboard was the work of a moment.

Carter was at first too exhausted to speak.

When they reached the landing stage he had fully recovered his faculties.

To his intense surprise, he found that the launch belonged to the steam yacht *Siren*, and the owner, Mr. J. L. Stone, was in it.

Carter revealed himself to the financier, after cautioning him not to give him away.

Mr. Stone was astounded, and asked many questions.

Carter told him that he was not ready to give an account yet, except that there was no doubt that he had the grave robbers spotted.

"I am very pleased, Mr. Carter——"

"But I am not ready yet to act, and when I am I will tell you."

"Why won't you act now?"

"I wish to catch all those in the plot."

"Are there many?"

"Yes. I have one of the most noted crooks in Europe to deal with, and when I catch him it will be murder that he will have to answer for."

By this time Mr. Stone's carriage had arrived, and the detective, at his suggestion, placed the girl in it.

"I will let you have the carriage when we get to where I can get a cab," he said.

"All right. I will take the girl to a hospital. She already shows signs of coming to."

"I am very glad of that; she looks like a lady."

"Yes, she certainly does."

"Do you know who she is?"

"No, I have not the least idea, but I think she is connected with the mystery of that fateful little box."

"I hope she is; then you will find out all about her, and perhaps the terrible wrong she has suffered will be avenged."

"If it can be, Mr. Stone, it shall be."

"Good. When I hear you say that, I feel sure of it."

By this time the carriage had reached the more populous part of town, and with a "Good luck, Mr. Carter," the Wall Street king left it.

In a few minutes Carter reached a hospital.

He went in and told one of the doctors who he was, and delivered his patient.

The doctor said she would live, unless the exposure killed her, and then Carter left, after promising to call in the morning.

He did not have to think for a moment where he would have to go.

He told the driver to take him to Fortieth Street, naming a place a few blocks away from the house with the secret passage.

Carter's one idea was to get possession of the iron box.

Then he would know what was the motive which had made the great crimes of murder and grave-robbing worth while.

After that it was only a question of a little time when he would have all the crooks, including that arch fiend, the baron, in custody.

He smiled at the thought of that elegant gentleman behind the bars, waiting for the electric chair to finish him.

He hoped, however, to find out who the girl whose

life they had attempted, was, and what connection she had with the iron box.

He was full of these thoughts when the carriage stopped and the footman opened the door.

Carter tipped the man, adding the driver's share, and the carriage drove away.

As it did so he heard the driver say: "That's a tough looker, but he certainly knows what's what."

Carter lost no time in getting to the secret passage.

The house was dark as usual, and considering that it was early in the morning, that was not remarkable.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER THE BOX—A NARROW ESCAPE.

A careful examination showed that the trapdoor and the entrance to the passage were as they had been when Carter left them a few hours before.

He lost no time in getting down into the earth, and a second or two later was at the peephole in the picture.

Seated at the table was Sam Slick, and in front of him was the bottle which was helping him to recover his nerves.

Carter noticed that his hand shook when he helped himself from it, and that he spilled some of the fiery liquor on the cloth of the table.

"I wish he'd hurry up," Carter heard him mutter. "I want to get out of this. Those women are always the devil. One would think she was on. Before I'd stand her cutting up like that I'd——"

He did not finish his sentence, as the baron came hurriedly into the room. Before he sat down he carefully bolted the door.

"Well, did you shut her up?" asked Slick.

"Oh, yes—after a fashion. She won't believe we didn't hurt the girl."

"Well, we didn't, did we?"

"No; we can truthfully say that. But she thinks we have killed her."

"We didn't even do that. The water took it off our hands," and Slick smiled his evil smile.

It made Carter's blood boil to hear them.

He could willingly have killed them both at that moment.

To his kind heart, the idea of hurting a woman was the most revolting thing possible.

"Well, we can't bring her back to life, and since that job is over, and we are not going to work together any longer, I'd like——"

"Oh, you want your money, eh, Mr. Slick?"

"That's about it, count."

"Well, you've earned it."

"You bet I have. But I don't want any more of that kind."

"You needn't take this."

"That's different. I've put my head in the noose and got clear, and I don't care to try it again."

"Hard on the nerves, eh?"

"Kind of. Now, count, if you'll hand that coin over I'll be getting away from here."

"All right."

The baron put his hand into his inside pocket and drew out a large wallet.

At the sight of it, Sam Slick's eyes burned in their sockets. He was a man who would do anything for money.

The baron pulled out five one-thousand-dollar bills and handed them over to Slick.

"You haven't any smaller ones, have you?" he asked, anxiously.

"No, I haven't—at least, not enough to pay you."

"Can't you get them in the morning?"

"Of course I can."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll stay here to-night, or at least for the rest of the night, and then in the——"

"In the morning I will give it to you, all right."

"Well, I guess I'll go to bed now."

"All right, Slick. Wait a moment, and I will show you where you can sleep."

"Can't I sleep where I did before?"

"No; not to-night. Julie is in that room. Come on."

The baron led the way, and the men left the room.

Carter immediately pushed the picture aside and jumped into the room.

He rushed to the closet and took the box.

He started across to the hole in the wall again, when he heard the baron's voice:

"I must get my keys. Wait a moment, Slick," and he came into the room.

Carter stepped back, hoping that he would not look around.

The baron picked up his keys from the table and looked up. The picture was away from the hole.

His face changed to a look of utter surprise, and then he wheeled around.

Carter struck him on the point of the jaw, and he fell with a crash.

As he did so, the box slipped from the detective's arm and fell on the floor, spilling all the papers out.

Carter fell on his knees and commenced picking them up.

He wanted those papers badly.

The baron struggled to his feet, and, with a cry, flung himself at the detective.

Nick heard him and met his rush, but he had not time to get to his feet.

The baron's weight was sufficient to knock Carter down, as he had no chance to brace himself.

Snarling like a dog, the baron threw himself on Nick.

On the floor, however, it was only a question of time.

Carter, with his knowledge of wrestling and his superb strength, which had entirely recovered from the severe test it had been put to in the river, was a match for any two men.

The baron was wild with rage, and beat Carter with his clinched hands.

Just as the detective put a half Nelson on him and was about to escape, Sam Slick rushed into the room.

He saw at a glance how matters stood.

Picking up a heavy chair, he struck at Carter.

The legs of the chair struck the floor, but the detective realized that the next blow would crush his skull.

He immediately stiffened out, as though he were killed, and as luck would have it, a thin stream of blood commenced to trickle from his forehead, from a place where the baron had scratched him.

The baron arose, panting, to his feet, and commenced picking up the precious papers.

Slick stood over Carter, with the chair uplifted, waiting for him to show some sign of life, but the detective did not stir.

"By God! we've got him!" said Slick, lowering the chair.

"Yes, yes; but how did he come here?"

"By the passage—the secret passage!"

"But how—but why did he?"

"He must have known of——"

"Of us! of us! He couldn't!"

"Well, I don't know. Let's look at him."

Slick leaned over Carter and turned his face to the light.

"Good God! It's Nick Carter, the detective!" he gasped.

"Nick Carter—the man who——"

"Yes, the man who had me sent up—the most dangerous man in New York."

"Well, he can't do much now. But how did he know about the box?"

"He know? He knows everything, that man."

"But we will be caught—we'll be caught——"

"Brace up, brace up, count. We're not caught until we are behind the bars."

"But if he gets away he'll have us arrested."

"If he gets away"—and Slick smiled. "Is he to get away?"

"What do you mean—what do you——"

"You know what I mean. Dead men tell no tales!"

"But——"

"There's no but about it. Let this man go and in an hour the whole police force of the city will be after us!"

"Must we do murder again?"

"This is not murder, count. It's that man's life or ours!"

"No, I know that."

"Well, what are you afraid of?"

"Where can we put the body?"

"Where—what's that passage for?"

"Hide it there?"

"Yes. Tomorrow you will get out of here."

Carter was feeling very uncomfortable during this conversation.

He lay quite quiet, however, breathing like a man who is unconscious.

He hoped to put them off their guard, and then make a rush for it. It would be a narrow escape if he did get away, but he had hopes.

Whenever Carter was in the worst fix he usually felt most hopeful. If he had ever given up, his life would have been forfeited.

"Well, we will have to kill him, count!"

"Yes; but I will not do it."

"No need to worry yourself about that. I haven't forgotten those five years he had me sent up for."

"And you will do it?" the baron asked, in a very relieved tone.

"You bet your sweet life I will!"

Slick got up and went to where Carter lay.

"Aha! my sweet thing, I'm going to get back at you at last," he said. "I swore if ever I got the chance I'd take it, and now it's come. Five years in jail—pah!" and he kicked the detective.

"That was a good wallop I handed you in the beginning—ch, my lovely one?" Slick was gloating over his victim, like a cat does over a mouse.

"But how are you going to do it?" asked the baron.

"How? Why, I'll beat him to death—that's what I'll do!"

"But it will be all bloody."

"Of course it will. You don't mind a little blood, do you?"

"But I don't like it. It is not nice."

"Ah, you Frenchies are all chicken-livered. Throwing girls overboard is about your size."

"You did it also."

"It was worth money to me, but this is worth more than money. This is my revenge, and I didn't think I'd ever get it."

"But where is a weapon? What will you use?"

"I'll bust this chair up, and use its legs. You know they're good and heavy."

Carter was getting anxious now.

Slick took the chair up again, and, taking a screw-driver out of his pocket, commenced to loosen the back legs.

Carter thought he saw his chance, and jumped to his feet.

He smashed Slick in the face and dashed to the hole in the wall.

As he tore past, the baron put out his foot and tripped him.

There was a furious struggle on the floor for a moment.

Slick was running around the two men, with the chair held aloft, so as to strike when he got an opening.

Carter was squirming and trying to keep the baron between himself and Slick.

It was only a question of a moment or two, and Slick would get his chance, and Carter was fighting desperately.

Nick looked up under the baron's body and saw Slick

poise himself, get ready to strike, and then he heard an exclamation.

Chick went over backward, and the chair dropped with a crash.

In the next second the baron received a blow on the back of the head, and he straightened out and lay stiff.

His body was jerked off Nick, and—

"Chick! Chick! My God! how glad I am to see you!" gasped the great detective.

Chick smiled, and almost embraced his chief.

He was as glad as Nick that he had been in time.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT CHICK HAD DONE.

Nick was so exhausted with his struggle that he sank into a chair. As he did so, the young detective turned his attention to the two men.

Chick was stirring too much to be safe.

Chick leaned over him, and there was a thud.

"Be careful—be careful, Chick. Don't kill him."

"Oh! I don't want him waking up too soon."

"Well, you needn't knock his head off."

"All right; but this little billy never did any harm, and I have used it a good deal."

"Well, you know, my boy. I could have lain there on the floor and shot them both, but I didn't want the police making in."

"No, that would not be very——"

"Very pleasant, eh? Well, we don't want them butting in on our case now that we have it almost ended."

"That's right. They always take all the credit."

"Well, young man, I think we'd better get out of here."

"Aren't you going to take them in?"

"Not yet. They can't get away now."

"Well, let's tie them up for good measure."

"All right—go ahead! I am going to get these papers together."

"What's that box?"

"That's the box that was in the tomb——"

"The box——"

"The box which was taken out of the grave in St. Paul's churchyard?"

"It is? Well—but I'll tie these crooks up!" And he commenced tearing the tablecloth up into strips, and binding the men so that they could not move. He had done and lost of time before, and was an adept at it.

Nick, in the meanwhile, was gathering up the papers and putting them into the little iron box.

In a moment they had both finished and started to go.

Nick took a final survey of the room and turned to follow Chick, who had already gone into the passage.

The great detective was stepping into the aperture, when he heard Chick call.

"S-s-h—s-s-h!" he warned.

Nick stopped and listened.

The sound of retreating footsteps came faintly to their ears.

Chick plunged down into the passage, and Nick was close behind him.

They were too late, however.

The trapdoor was open, showing that whoever had gone ahead had been in a great hurry.

The detectives climbed to the surface as soon as they could.

All they saw was a figure in the distance, running like all possessed.

Chick started after him, but Nick called him back.

"Let him go—let him go!" he said.

Chick came back, and seemed rather surprised.

"Why, I could have caught him—I'm sure I could have——"

"I doubt it, old man. Never mind."

"Did you know him? You speak as though you knew he could run."

"I think it was the Rat. What he is doing here is beyond me."

"Probably some job of the baron's," Chick replied.

"Maybe; but you have shadowed both the Rat and the Professor since I told you to, and they have not seen——"

"Seen the count, or baron, or whatever he is? No, they have not."

"He must have come back here to do some dirty work on his own hook," commented Nick.

"I guess that's it. But what are you going to do now?"

"Well, I think I shall go to my rooms."

"But why? Aren't you going to watch the house and see that no one escapes from it?"

"I am going to my rooms, and you are going, too. I want to find out what has been going on with you."

Chick saw that his chief was very tired, and that he was set on going to his rooms, so without any more demur he followed him.

As they passed the police station, Carter looked in and saw that the sergeant on the desk was a friend of his.

"I will put you onto a good thing, sergeant," he said, in his usual quiet tones.

"You will? Who are you, anyway?" was the gruff answer.

"Oh, I'm on, and I'll put you wise if you're good," was Nick's reply.

"Say, young fellow, you need a shave, and I guess you're a bit loose in the upper story, eh?"

"Yes, got 'em bad!"

"I'm sorry for you." The sergeant turned to Chick: "Say, can't you take care of your friend here? I don't want to pull him——"

Then Nick began to laugh.

He turned over the rail in front of the sergeant's desk.

"Look at me quickly," he commanded.

The sergeant did so.

Nick Carter removed his beard for the fraction of a minute.

"Nick Carter? by all that's holy!" was the ejaculation of the astonished officer.

"Keep it dark—keep it dark!" was Nick's warning.

"What do you want, Mr. Carter?" asked Sergt. Mulvaney.

"I'll tell you. I have two crooks corralled in Diamond Annie's old place, and I want you to take care they don't get loose."

"Well, I'll give you the men, and you can go and pinch them."

"Not now—I haven't time. I'll wait a day or two. They are connected with the St. Paul's——"

"The grave robbery? You don't mean——"

"Yes, I do."

"Good Lord! but you're lucky!"

Carter smiled at this.

"I want you to have the credit of taking them. That's why I am telling you of it. But you must not go near them until I tell you."

"I won't! You can bet your sweet life I'll do as you say, sir!"

"Well, do this: Send enough men to watch the house, front and rear."

"The rear has that secret passage, hasn't it?"

"Yes, but it opens so that any one coming out must go through the alley."

"All right!"

"Have enough men to guard it as I say! Then you'll want men in the houses on either side, because those crooks are quite capable of getting out through the walls of the houses next door!"

"I understand now, sir, and I'll do as you say."

"Good! But you want to get busy right away!"

"I will!" and the sergeant rang his bell.

Nick Carter and his young assistant went out, feeling that they could now afford to take a rest.

"I guess the police can watch the house, all right, Chick!" said Nick.

"That's all they're good for!"

"Oh, they're better than that!"

"Not much!"

"You don't know all I do about them, or you would not say that," answered the older man.

They took a car, and in a few minutes were at Nick's rooms.

Both men were very tired, and each felt that he could afford to sleep.

Before going to sleep, however, Chick made his report to his chief.

The Rat and the Professor were in no danger of getting away.

Chick had been with them all night and had turned their every room. They had gone to their crib after leaving the house of the secret passage, and had gone to bed.

Their plans for the following day were found out by Chick. They intended going to the races. After that, a visit to a gambling house, and then back to the crib, where they intended getting drunk to celebrate.

This was a summary of their plans, and Nick felt that he would have no trouble in finding them when he wanted them.

After a recital of his day's doings by Carter, which amazed Chick and made him feel that he was an amateur beside his chief, the two men went to their rooms.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESCUED GIRL.

The next morning at about eleven, Nick got up.

He did not feel any the worse for his bath in the river, but his body was sore in several places from the rough-house he had indulged in with the baron and Sam Slick.

He called Chick, who was sleeping as only the young can.

"Get up, man! We are off to the hospital!"

"To see the girl, eh?"

"Yes, since! I think she will have a story worth listening to."

"She suppose she is not conscious or is too weak to talk?"

"I know better! This has just come from the doctor in charge."

Nick drew a paper out of his pocket and read: "Your patient is doing very well, and can see you at about twelve today." "That's how she is getting along, Chick, and I think it is wonderful."

"Yes, it's a wonder to me that she is not dead after the way she had yesterday!"

"Dropped and thrown into the river!"

"From which a detective saved her at the risk of his life?"

"Oh, cut it out! I did only what any man would have done under the same circumstances, Chick."

"You always say that."

"Wouldn't you have done it?"

"I'd have tried!"

"See? Of course you would! Well, let's get busy and get her."

A few minutes after, the detectives left the rooms and took a car for the hospital.

After satisfying the authorities who guard the door of that place, they were shown into the room occupied by the girl. She was up, but was too weak to do anything but sit in a chair surrounded by pillows.

When the detectives entered, she tried to get up to welcome them.

She was a very beautiful young woman, and Nick felt more glad than ever that he had saved her.

It was a belief of his that all the beautiful things in this world of ours should be preserved to the end, and he felt that he had lived up to his creed when he saw her.

"Which one of you is Mr. Carter—which one?" she asked, eagerly.

"We are both Carters!" answered Nick.

"But which one is Mr. Nick?"

"He is," and Chick pointed to him.

"Oh, Mr. Carter! I cannot tell you how much I thank——"

"If you'll pardon me," interrupted Nick, "it is I that am thankful that I had the chance."

"But you saved me from death!"

"That's all right, Miss——" Nick was at loss for her name.

"Montresor is my name, Mr. Carter."

Nick looked at Chick, and he returned the glance.

However, they said nothing about the name, although both noticed it.

"I see you notice my name," she said.

"Why, yes—it sounds familiar," answered Nick.

"You must have heard it a good deal lately. The famous St. Paul's churchyard mystery is connected with it. The grave was the tomb of an ancestor of mine who fought in the Revolutionary War."

"I know all about that, Miss Montresor," said Nick, smiling. "I am engaged at present trying to find out why the grave was robbed."

"You are? Well, I think I can tell you!"

"You can?"

"Yes! But it's a long story!"

"We don't mind that, do we, Chick? But I haven't introduced my most valued assistant to you. This is Mr. Chickering Carter, Miss Montresor, and he has within the last few hours saved my life!"

Chick blushed at the praise, but when he said he was pleased to meet the lady, he seemed very sincere.

They then went on talking about the case.

"I will tell you as briefly as I can how I am connected with this grave mystery," said Miss Montresor.

"As you know, the grave was that of Maj. James Montresor.

"He was a good and brave soldier, and gave his life for his country. He was dying in New York at the time the British captured the town. On the day they entered he died and was buried.

"His wife went to France and married again.

"A younger brother also came to France and married there and I am a lineal descendant of that branch of the family.

"At present, however, I am the only one alive.

"When Maj. James Montresor died he was a very wealthy man and owned a great deal of land which is now invaluable.

"However, when he died he left his widow only enough

to live on, which was a great blow to her, as she had married him for his money."

"Served her right!" said Chick.

"I think so, too," said Miss Montresor, continuing, "and all the money which he had disappeared.

"The titles of the land also could not be found.

"About a year later the lands reverted to the State, as is the custom in unclaimed property.

"The heirs then living in France did not think it worth while to come over here and look the land up, so they lost it all. The greater part of the lands were in and around St. Paul's."

"To make this story short, I will tell you directly how I came to be mixed up in it.

"About five years ago I made up my mind that I would try and find where the money went to which my ancestor had when he died.

"The lands, of course, I gave up.

"My mother and I are very poor, and it was not until this year that I could afford to come over here.

"Now that I look back, I am sure my troubles commenced on the second evening over.

"There was a gentleman who was very kind to me. He called himself Count Emil Bechet, and he had his wife, Julie, along.

"They were very nice to me, and in the course of the voyage I told them of my search and how I hoped to succeed.

"They were both very much interested, and the count promised me every help."

"He did his best to aid my search, all right," said Nick.

"What do you mean?"

"You will understand later, Miss Montresor!"

"Well, I will wait. As I said, I told them all about it.

"When we landed they suggested my staying with them, but I preferred going to a hotel.

"Last night I took dinner with them, and the last thing I remember was drinking a cup of coffee.

"The next thing after that was having the doctor tell me to wake up."

"Well, Miss Montresor, I can tell you a good deal about the time when you were drugged," said Nick.

"Oh, do; please do!"

"Well, the same night you were drugged, a number of things happened which affected you.

"The papers which tell of the money your ancestor had and where it is, were delivered into the hands of the count, who, by the way, is a noted French swindler, Baron Claude de Rhaenan, by name.

"These papers were your death warrant.

"The count decided that it would not be safe to have both the rightful owner and himself alive, and as the owner was a woman, she had to go."

"What a heartless wretch!" said Miss Montresor.

"Yes, he was. Well, he hired a man to help him, and they went and threw you in the river. I happened to be there and brought you ashore."

"But what became of the baron and his accomplice? Surely, you did not allow the villains to escape?"

"Escape! Well, hardly! They are cooped up in the house where you were drugged. Julie is there, too."

"What are you going to do with them?"

"The men will get all the cold hand of the law allows them, and the woman we will try to let off."

"Oh, yes. I don't think she would have hurt me."

"That's right, plead for your own sex," laughed Nick Carter. "But I believe you. I myself heard her plead for you and make her husband promise not to hurt you."

"Ah, the villain! What a beast he is!" and the girl shuddered.

"Well, he'll get all their coming to him," said Chick.

"But what about the papers?" asked Miss Montresor.

"I have them all, I think," said Nick.

"But where did they come from?"

"Out of the tomb of Maj. James Montresor."

"They did?"

"Yes, that was why it was broken open."

"How incredible!"

"It's a fact, though, and I will bring them to you tomorrow and you can go over them and see what they say."

"It is so good of you."

"No, no. But we must go now. We have other business to attend to. Come on, Chick. Good-bye, Miss Montresor."

"Oh, good-bye, Mr. Carter, and you, Mr. Chick. You cannot tell how grateful I am."

But Nick waved his hand from the door, and before she could pour out the thanks from her overflowing heart, they were both gone.

"The noblest man that God ever made!" was her verdict of Nick Carter, and it was little less flattering of Chick.

She sat there for a long time thinking of her great good fortune. After crossing the ocean and then being nearly murdered, to find that her quest was to end in a day.

Miss Montresor was overjoyed, and she thought for a long time of her noble rescuer and the great good luck he had brought her.

Nick at that time was thinking of something else.

He was thinking of how his case might be closed in the best possible manner.

His one idea was to catch all the crooks who were concerned in the matter, and, if possible, to have them all sent to jail.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW NICK CAUGHT THEM ALL.

As they walked along, they talked about the strange idea of all this money lying idle for over a century, and what a wonderful thing it was that it should all come back to its rightful owner.

"Of course we don't know that she can get the money, and we——"

"We don't even know where it is," added Chick.

"Well, we'll see when the papers are read."

"Yes, they will tell."

They walked in silence for a time, and then suddenly Nick turned to his assistant.

"I have it! I have it!" he said.

"What? What is it that's got you?"

"No, I'm not joking. But I wonder can you do it?"

"What's this? Something exciting, I hope!"

"It may be so. I want you to get the Rat and the Professor to go to the house-with the secret passage to-night."

"Why do you want that?"

"Well, we can gather the whole bunch in at one swoop."

"Grand idea. But how can I get them to come?"

"Give them some bluff."

"Oh, I know. I'll give them a false message that the count wants them again; and I'll tell them that it is double money this time."

"What? Good! Very good! You do that, and call me up on the telephone and let me know."

"I'll tell them at nine."

"All right, and I will have all the secret service men out of the way and the two crooks can go in by way of the secret passage."

"And then what?"

"And then the deluge. We will pile in after them from both the passage and the front door, and overpower them."

"All right. That sounds like a sporting event."

"Oh, there will be fun enough while it lasts."

"Yes, they will be armed, expecting something of the kind."

"Well, we've got to risk that."

"Our luck holds good, I hope."

"Let's hope so."

"Well, I'm off to get them that message. They will be back from the races in a couple of hours."

"All right."

Chick left his chief and started downtown.

Nick returned to his rooms.

From there he called up Sergt. Mulvancy, at the police station, and found that the count had tried to leave the house by the back way.

He was met by several secret service men, and, after a short talk, went back.

Slick tried to make a get-away by the front door, but was also headed off and turned back.

Carter told the sergeant that the good thing was coming off that night at nine, and to be ready; and then hung off.

A little after six o'clock, Chick called him up on the phone.

The fish had taken the hook and would be on hand.

They had lost a lot of money at the races, and anything that looked like easy money was right in their line.

Nick told Chick to get there early, and then went out to get his dinner.

Carter was on the scene early and posted the secret service men.

He was to watch for the men, and when they came in sight, all the detectives were to duck for cover.

Then, when Nick blew his whistle, a regular assault was to take place.

All the plans were perfected.

About half-past eight Chick reported to his chief that he had seen the two crooks start.

A few minutes of nine Carter gave the signal, and in the twinkling of an eye not a detective was to be seen.

The Rat and the Professor skulked along on the dark side of the alley until they reached the shanty in the back yard.

Here they paused.

"I thought I heard something," said the Rat.

Then they both listened.

"Aw, you're getting cold feet again," sneered his companion.

"I ain't, but I don't like that dark hole."

"The dark never hurt any one. Come on."

They entered the shanty.

A second later a tall, well-built shadow arose from the darkness along the fence and whistled shrilly.

Men leaped from everywhere.

There was an answering whistle from the other street.

Carter was the first into the hole.

As he reached the bottom Chick was by his side, and they raced to see who would be the first to the picture.

"They'll shoot—be careful!" warned Nick.

He was right.

As soon as he showed himself there were shots from the room.

Nick fell on his face in the passage, and the first discharge passed over him.

Then he leaped into the room.

All four men were there.

Nick rushed at the baron.

Click at Slick.

Before the others could help their comrades in crime, Sergt. Mulvaney was in the room.

Three of his men followed him.

There was a lively scuffle for a time.

The Rat pulled a gun, but as he leveled it at Nick, the sergeant's club came down and broke his wrist.

The gun dropped, and so did the Rat.

The Professor drew a knife, but two men had him, and he was out of it. The baron put up a good fight, but Nick landed on his jaw, and he went down and out.

Slick quit when Chick grabbed him, but as the detective started to slip the handcuffs on him, he struck him in the face.

Chick immediately handed him one, and Sam Slick curled up and quit.

When the smoke of battle cleared away, they were aware that a woman was in the room.

It was Julie, and she was kneeling at the feet of the baron, imploring him to go away.

Carter raised her gently. "He cannot, madam, not now."

She turned to him with her eyes blazing. "How dare you put those irons on a French nobleman? How dare you, sir?"

"I dare do it, because I am an American citizen, and I have found him out in his crimes."

"What crimes has he done?"

"For one he drowned Lucy Montresor."

"He drowned her? It cannot be!" then, turning to her husband, "did you harm her?"

"No, I didn't. Slick, there, threw her in the river." and the baron was pale from fear now, and he began to tremble, "and I tried to stop him."

"You tried to stop me?" yelled Slick. "My God! he offered me five thousand dollars to help him do it!"

"That's enough! You can say all that later at the trial. But you heard that, men?" Carter said, to the officers.

"Yes, sir, we did," they responded.

Julie stood like a person stunned.

She was hearing things about her husband, her idol, which she could not have believed possible in any man.

She turned to him, and putting her arms around his neck, begged him to refute the accusations.

"Oh, say that it is not so. Say it! Say it! They will believe you. I know they will," she pleaded.

He looked down at her, and then looked around the crowd of faces, all of which saw in him only the murderer.

For a moment more he held out, and then his head dropped.

Julie started from him, her eyes open wide with horror.

"You cannot say it. You cannot!" She looked at him, and then swayed where she stood.

Quick as he was, Nick was not quick enough to catch her.

She fell; the shock had been too much, and she had swooned.

"That's the best thing for the poor darling," said the big-hearted sergeant.

They put her on the sofa, and the prisoners were led away.

The baron broke down.

Slick reviled him until he was told to shut his mouth.

but the other two took the matter as though they were used to it.

Carter saw them all locked safely in jail, and then went with the matron in a carriage and took Julie.

She was not taken to the jail.

Instead, Carter went bail for her, and she was taken to the hospital.

There she found Lucy Montresor, and they became fast friends.

The next day Carter brought the iron box to Miss Montresor.

When Carter gave it to her, Julie was in the room.

She looked at it, and then, turning pale, asked if that was it.

Lucy answered that it was.

Carter looked at them inquiringly.

"Julie has heard from me for the first time to-day what the iron box was and what it contained."

"Didn't she know before?" asked the detective.

"She knew that it was of value and that her husband wanted it, but she did not know that it contained papers which belonged to me."

"No, I did not," Julie asserted.

"I believe you, countess," said Carter, putting out his hand. Julie shook hands with him warmly, and his strong, firm handshake seemed to give her courage.

Then they all three went through the papers.

From these it appeared that the fortune which Maj. James Montresor left amounted to about half a million pounds, and it was all in the Bank of England.

This would all come to Lucy Montresor, and with the interest which had accumulated, it was a very great fortune.

Carter congratulated her.

"But, Mr. Carter, you saved my life and found my fortune—won't you—?"

"No, Miss Montresor, I cannot take anything from you. I am paid very well for my work. I thank you all the same."

"But, Mr. Carter—"

"No, no!" Nick smiled. "but I tell you what you might do. You might reward the person who helped recover the papers. At least, who has suffered from the recovery more than any of us," and he looked at Julie.

Julie was looking out of the window and missed his glance.

After wishing them good-day, Carter withdrew. He had another call to make.

After returning to his room, he put on the same disguise he wore on the day he saw the robbery was discovered.

Chick came in as he was dressing, and he was told to do likewise.

"Foreign investors again to-day, Chick," he said.

"All right, Nick."

CHAPTER XIII.

J. L. STONE'S OFFICE.

About an hour later two foreign-looking gentlemen asked to see Mr. J. L. Stone.

The junior clerk who answered the door said that Mr. Stone was busy, but he'd see.

In a moment he came back. "Mr. Stone is not seeing any one to-day—he is very busy."

"Is that so? Well, tell him that a gentleman has come to make his report."

"But he won't see you."

"Go and tell him."

The young fellow went, and in a moment returned.

"Mr. Stone says step right this way."

They followed the boy into the private office, and Mr. Stone arose to meet them.

As soon as the door was closed: "Well, did you find them? Have you got them?" he questioned, eagerly.

"Yes, sir, we have found the vandals, and what's more, we have the men who paid them to do their work."

"The men who paid them?"

"Yes, it is quite a long story."

"Well, I want to hear it; every bit of it."

"All right, sir; I'll tell it to you."

Then Carter told of the search for the missing documents, and of their finding in the churchyard.

"But how did the baron know of their being in the grave?" asked Mr. Stone.

"I haven't found that out yet."

"You haven't?"

"No, I asked him about it, but he has developed into a sullen brute, and you cannot get a word out of him."

"I'm sorry, I'd like to know."

Carter went on telling the story, which, to the ears of the great man of Wall Street, sounded like a fairy story.

Every now and then he would make the detective

repent a part of it. Of course he knew of the incident of the rescue of Miss Montresor.

"That was a plucky thing, Mr. Carter," he said, "I was proud to know you that time."

"It was nothing, nothing," Carter said.

"It was not nothing, nothing. It showed me the true character of the man I had on the track of those scoundrels who desecrated our oldest church, and I knew then that they would be caught."

"Well, I usually try to catch the people I am after," smiled Nick.

There does not remain much of the story to be told.

Nick did not forget the incident in Diamond Annie's old gambling house, when only for the very timely arrival of Chick, the case would have never been solved.

"And what will become of the Baroness De Rhaenan?" asked Mr. Stone.

"She is going back to France with Miss Montresor," answered Nick. "They both come from the same place over there."

"Is she very much hurt over her husband's being hanged?"

"She was, but her mother took her into custody, and she ceased to care."

"I'm glad of that. He is a scoundrel."

"Yes, there is no doubt of it, and he will get the maximum sentence."

"And that is?"

"About twenty years."

"Good, that will keep him out of mischief for a while."

"There's no doubt of that, and the other two, the Rat and the Professor, they will get a large and hard penitentiary sentence, also."

"Well, they all deserve it. Of course the Baron's accomplices will share his sentence."

"Oh, yes, the offense is the same."

"Well, Mr. Carter and your younger double, you have cleared this matter up thoroughly. I cannot tell you what an appreciation I have of your services and how I wish you were both my assistants."

"Well, Mr. Stone, it is very kind of you to say all that, but I am afraid our little gifts lie in a direction which would not be appreciated in the Street."

They all laughed at this remark of Nick's, and then Mr. Stone rang for his cashier.

"Please make out a check for twenty-five thousand dollars, payable to the order of Mr. Carter, here, Mr. Nicolas Carter."

The cashier almost gasped, but his training came to his rescue, and he managed to get out of the door without fainting.

A minute later he returned, and the check was handed to Nick, with the remark: "I never spent money more profitably in my whole life," from Mr. Stone.

The detectives then said good-by, and Mr. Stone asked Nick always to let him know where he was in case he should need him.

The cases against the four criminals turned out as Nick Carter had predicted.

They all received maximum sentences.

Miss Montresor returned to her mother in France, and with her went Julie de Rhaenan.

The money in the Bank of England turned out to be all right, and it made Miss Montresor one of the wealthiest women in Europe.

Although she is admired and courted by most of the nobility over there, she always remembers with the keenest appreciation and gratitude that she owes her life and fortune to Nicolas Carter.

THE END.

A band of train robbers was committing fearful depredations along the Union Pacific Railroad, and defied all the efforts of the Omaha detectives to capture them. At last Nick Carter was summoned to take charge of the case. It was a bitter fight to a finish, splendidly waged on both sides. It makes a particularly fine story for the next issue, No. 369, entitled "Nick Carter and the Nebraska Outlaws; or, Playing a Desperate Game."

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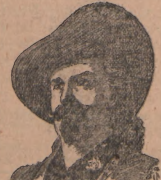
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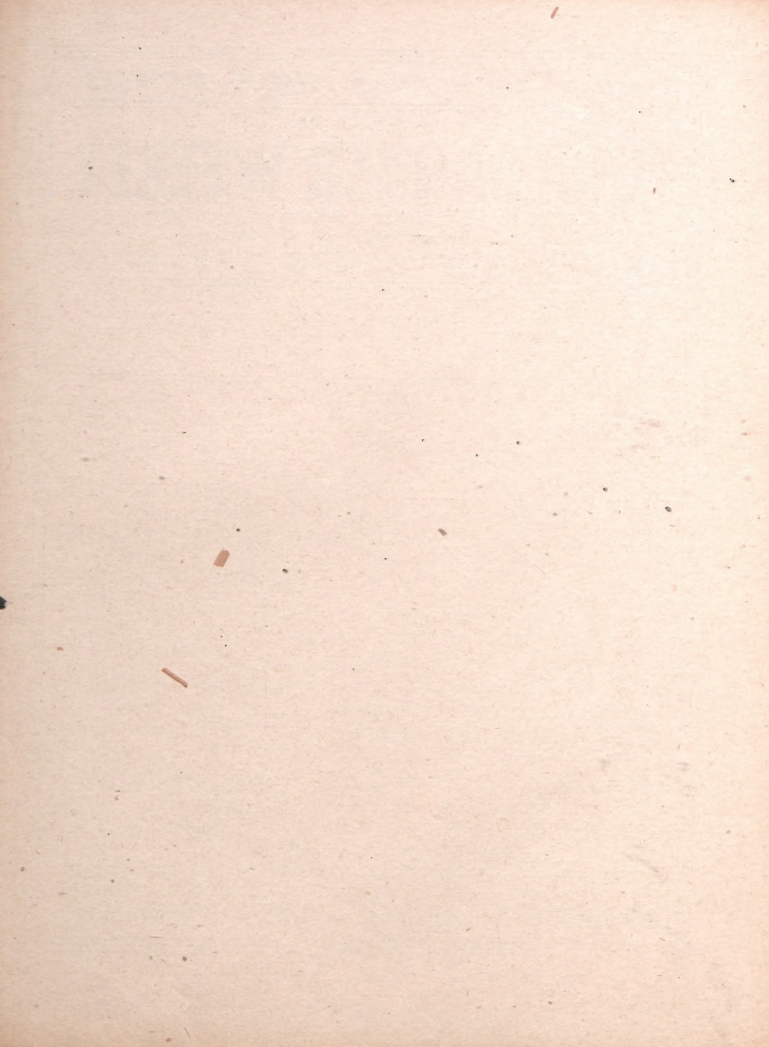


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